

Regulating Pesticide Use in Alaska

December 2014



Pesticide Control Program

*Division of
Environmental Health*

**Department
of
Environmental
Conservation**

Wasilla Office:

1700 E. Bogard Road

Wasilla, AK 99654

(907) 376-1870

Fax (907) 376-2382

<http://dec.alaska.gov/eh/pest>

The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Pesticide Control Program regulates the use of pesticides in Alaska. This factsheet covers common questions, including the role that the DEC Pesticide Control Program fulfills in Alaska, and a description and purpose for the 2013 regulation changes concerning pesticide application on state lands.

Why use pesticides?

Alaska is known for its flora and fauna, but some varieties can become burdensome or dangerous depending on the circumstances. Invasive species and vegetation on roadways and rail corridors pose a particular threat. Mechanical removal, prevention, and other means of control – while important – are not always effective or practical to get rid of the worst offenders.



Invasive Canadian Thistle

Chemical pesticides are valuable tools that, when used correctly, can help resource agencies respond quickly to outbreaks of invasive species before they become established and spread. They can also be used to combat infestations of pests — such as fleas — when other methods have proven ineffective.

While these substances can be dangerous if not used appropriately, DEC's Pesticide Control Program protects public health and the environment through regulation of pesticide use, sale, and distribution in Alaska.

What is the DEC Pesticide Control Program's role in pesticide regulation?

The Pesticide Control Program implements a comprehensive pesticide program for the state of Alaska, in coordination with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Pesticide control is achieved through a combination of inspections and technical assistance; training and certification of pesticide applicators; and education and outreach.



Farmer in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley



Regulating Pesticide Use in Alaska



Pesticide Control Program

The Pesticide Control Program inspects locations where pesticides are sold to ensure that only registered pesticides are being offered; we inspect certified pesticide applicators to ensure that they are mixing, applying, and storing pesticides correctly, as well as keeping required records; and we inspect pesticide use at farms and other high-use areas. The Pesticide Control Program conducts over 50 inspections per year across Alaska.

The Pesticide Control Program also administers a training and certification program for pesticide applicators who are involved in professional or commercial application or consultation, as well as dealers and private applicators of restricted-use pesticides.

The Pesticide Control Program develops the exams, establishes testing procedures, grades all completed exams, and issues certification cards, while the University of Alaska Cooperative Extension Service cooperates with us by conducting the majority of training. In addition to these activities, the Pesticide Control Program also implements programs related to pesticides and water quality, farm worker protection, and endangered species protection.

How are pesticides registered and approved for use by EPA and DEC?

Before manufacturers can sell pesticides in the United States, the EPA evaluates the pesticides thoroughly to make sure they can be used without posing harm or “unreasonable adverse effects” to human health or the environment. If risks or concerns are identified, appropriate risk mitigation measures are required by EPA.

These measures are implemented through product label requirements, which may include reductions in application rates, restrictions to approved sites or commodities, advisory statements, implementation of specific management practices, and other restrictions or limitations designed to mitigate risk. Compliance with label instructions is required by both state and federal law, and is the cornerstone of ensuring pesticide safety.

DEC also conducts a thorough review of each pesticide to ensure it is appropriate for use in Alaska, and to verify that it complies with EPA registration requirements. The DEC website maintains a pesticide database on which anyone can view whether a product is currently registered.



Common Pesticide Use

Pesticide products must be registered with both the EPA and the DEC Pesticide Control Program to be sold in Alaska, including pesticides sold online.

What is the DEC Pesticide Control Program’s role in pest management?

The Pesticide Control Program does not apply pesticides, nor does it make decisions on whether a pesticide should be used in response to a pest infestation. However, the program does participate in workgroups with other agencies to advise on the pesticide regulatory process, and help agencies with decisions involving the use of pesticides. Two current efforts that the program is participating in include the interagency workgroup analyzing how to respond to aquatic and terrestrial invasive species, and a separate workgroup looking at response and outreach related to bedbugs.



Regulating Pesticide Use in Alaska



Pesticide Control Program

PESTICIDE REGULATIONS

The Pesticide Control Program completed a regulations change in 2013, which replaced the permit requirement for pesticide applications on state land with a requirement that such applications be done under an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Plan, by a certified applicator, with public and agency notice.

Why were the regulations changed?

The regulations were changed to implement a risk-based approach for safeguarding the public health and the environment, and to allow for swift response for invasive species control.

Previously, permit requirements were applied based on underlying land ownership, with differing rules for applications on state, federal and private land regardless of the level of risk or time sensitiveness of the project. Higher risk projects, such as those that include aerial or water application, continue to require permits.

The revised regulations allow for more timely control of invasive species on state land. Transportation rights-of-way such as highways, roads, and railroads, are a significant means for the introduction and spread of invasive species. The ability for prompt response is necessary in order for resource managers to respond to an invasive species outbreak before it can spread and become more difficult or impossible to manage.

With the new regulations, an IPM Plan is required for state agencies. Pesticide application can only be done by a certified applicator, and application can only occur after certain public notification requirements are met. It is our expectation that this combination of requirements will cause agencies to carefully consider viable alternatives to pesticides and to better manage their use. These changes will also allow DEC to use its own resources more effectively in our oversight of pesticide use statewide.



Pesticide Application Along the Alaska Railroad (before)



Alaska Railroad Corridor (after)



Regulating Pesticide Use in Alaska



Pesticide Control Program

What is an Integrated Pest Management Plan?

Per EPA, Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is an effective and environmentally sensitive approach to pest management that relies on several common-sense practices. IPM programs use current, comprehensive information on the life cycles of pests and their interaction with the environment. This information, in combination with available pest control methods, is used to manage pest damage by the most economical means, and with the least possible hazard to people, property, and the environment. IPM takes advantage of all appropriate pest management options such as prevention and mechanical removal, as well as the judicious use of pesticides.

The Pesticide Control Program provides technical assistance to state agencies in developing their IPM Plan.

What activities require a permit instead of an IPM Plan?

A permit is required for higher risk pesticide applications, which include 1) pesticide application directly to water; 2) aerial application of a pesticide; or 3) pesticide application by a state, borough, or municipal government entity to multiple private properties (such as a public mosquito eradication project).

Is the public being protected under the new regulations?

Yes. The requirement for state agencies to complete IPM Plans for pesticide projects on state land is a sound management practice that ensures that all practical management options for pests are considered. Compliance with an IPM Plan, in conjunction with use of registered pesticides, application by a certified applicator, following label directions, compliance with other state and federal pesticide regulations, and DEC oversight, are protective of public health and the environment.

I am opposed to pesticide use, and want to stop application on state land.

DEC recognizes that some individuals have strong opinions regarding the use of pesticides, and acknowledges these concerns. However, decisions about pesticide risk must be based on a scientific analysis. DEC does not have the authority to restrict legal activities due to public opposition.

How can I get more information or provide specific input on state pesticide projects?

All IPM Plans received by the Pesticide Control Program are posted online at <http://dec.alaska.gov/eh/pest/>.

In addition, pesticide regulations at 18 AAC 90.640(b) require public notice of proposed pesticide applications by public agencies. The information in the notice includes the pesticide that will be used, the pest being targeted, the method of application, and agency contact information. This notice must appear in a newspaper of general circulation 30 days prior to pesticide application. The public is welcome to contact the agency to get more information and ask specific questions.

